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ABSTRACT

Unprecedented population growth and mounting fiscal austerity in Africa is causing a decline in the significant increases in educational progress, especially as measured by the median literacy rate, which were made between 1962 and 1985. Planning and implementation of educational programs carefully designed to effect economic growth is one path suggested whereby governments can bring about renewed progress. Government spending on education now averages between four and five percent of the gross national product across the region. Inequities exist in access to education in poor African countries where resources are minimal. In some countries as much as 60 percent of the population has never attended school. Recommendations for improving education include striving for universal primary education with selective expansion at the secondary and university levels as the best means to achieve Africa's social and economic goals. Charts of enrollments in primary schools between 1960 and 1983, public expenditures in education between 1970 and 1983, and 1985 unit costs of public education as a percentage of per capita gross national product in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are provided. Maps are included. (NL)

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AFRICA"S AGENDA FOR ACTION: REFORM POLICIES, RENEW PROGRESS

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THE WORLD BANK EDUCATION NEWS

Vol. 2 Second Quarter 1987 No. 1

Africa's Agenda for Action: reform policies, renew progress

United Nations photo

Educational progress has proceeded at a fast pace since most of the sub-Saharan African nations gained independence. (Maps on pages 4 and 5 identify the 39 nations called "Africa" in this issue.) One measure of this progress is the median literacy rate, which jumped from 10 to 42 percent from 1962 to 1985, while literacy in the higher-income African countries rose to 72 percent.

Recently, however, unprecedented population growth, mounting fiscal austerity and, in many cases, tenuous political and administrative institutions have caused a decline in educational gains. This hurts the economy and impedes social progress.

How can governments bring about renewed progress? "First, by setting priorities. Then, as soon as it is practical, by designing and carrying out well-planned education programs," says Education and Training Department senior economist Peter Moock, principal author of the Bank's draft paper, *Education Policies for sub-Saharan Africa: Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion.*

The paper is now being reviewed by the Bank's senior management and subsequently will be reviewed by the Board of Directors. If approved, it will become official Bank policy.

"This is the only way that education will have a discernible effect on economic growth by the end of the century," says Mr. Moock. "These programs will have three goals: first, adjustment—specifically unit cost containment and diversifying sources of finance; second, better-quality schools; and third, expansion in those areas of study that promise the greatest returns."

Adjustment

Lack of money is a major stumbling block for educational development in all of Africa, and it reaches crisis proportions in the poorest countries, such as Guinea Bissau, where supplies are scarce and classes large. A majority of children never attend school.

Even in more prosperous countries, such as Nigeria, which ten years ago had made impressive gains, schools have closed, teachers sometimes go unpaid, and enrollments are down.

To stop the decline, says Mr. Moock, "government spending on education, now averaging between 4% and 5% of GNP in the region, will have to increase gradually in many African countries. The plans for increases should include improvements in internal efficiency and financial viability. Where economic decline is forcing cutbacks in public spending, governments will have to tap alternate sources of funds: sharing costs with parents in public education and encouraging private schools."

See **Africa** *p. 4.*

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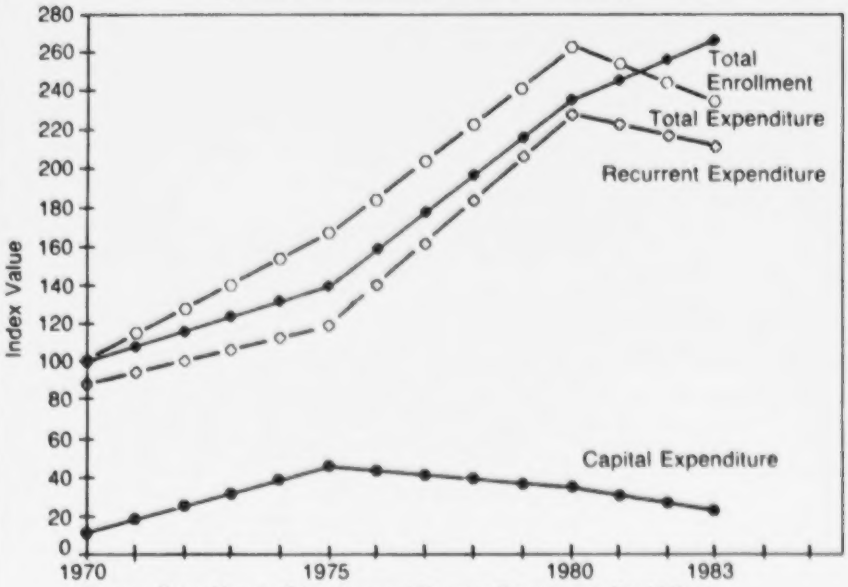
Public Domestic Expenditure on Education in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1970–1983
(millions of constant 1983 U.S. dollars)



Source: Peter Moock, Education and Training Department, World Bank

Africa, *from p. 1.*

In Zimbabwe and Kenya, parents and local communities contributed money and labor for the construction and rehabilitation of schools, and enrollments made steep gains. In Zimbabwe, between 1979 and 1985, for example, the increase was 160% for primary, 650% for secondary.

In Zambia, parents pay for textbooks, exercise books, rulers, math sets, erasers and other materials. Local communities contribute cash, material and labor. "And private, fee-paying schools are taking on a more dominant role," says Eileen Nkwanga, who recently joined the Bank's West Africa Education Division after working in Zambian education for almost 30 years.

"In most African countries, increased public and private spending will be needed to remedy problems of access and low quality at the primary level. But at the secondary and university levels," says Mr. Moock, "containing unit costs will be even more important than mobilizing resources."

Governments can cut costs by replacing secondary boarding schools with day schools. In small communities, distance education can reduce costs even further. In these self-study schools, radio or television supplements textbooks.

Teaching costs are low in such schools because primary-qualified teachers, older students, or community members can instruct classes. Facility costs are minimal because classes are held in study centers or in regular schools at night or during vacation periods. Student transportation and living costs are small because the radio-correspondence courses are given close to home.

The Malawi government found that the cost per student in this kind of program was only a third of that in a day school and an eighth of that in a boarding school.

For the university level, where costs are highest, governments are trying various other cost-cutting solutions: stiffer entrance exams to limit the number of students in public institutions; a deceleration in the growth of fields other than those that promise high returns (e.g., education, agriculture, science and engineering); tuition fees paid by parents; the elimination of living allowances and

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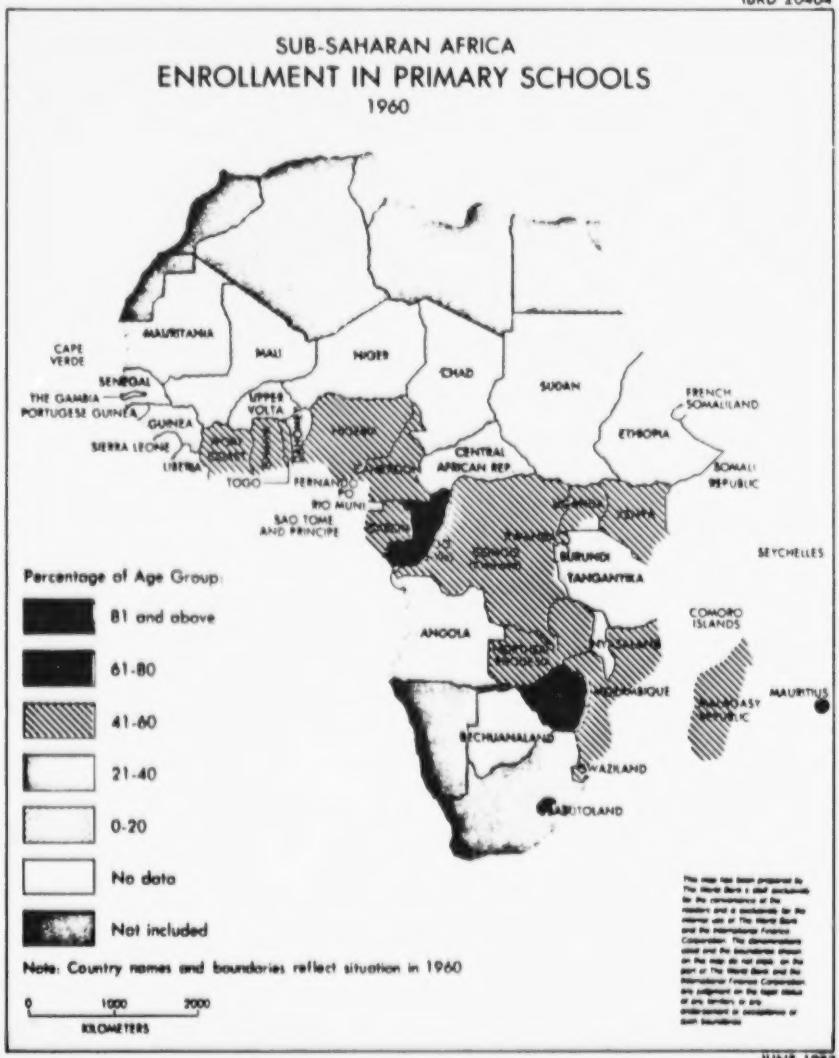

free room and board; student loans or part-time work in nonteaching jobs.

Scholarships based on need could ease the adverse effect on equity of some of these measures and reduce somewhat the resistance to these solutions by students and parents.

Restoring Quality

As more funds become available through increased efficiency and cost sharing, leaders in education can turn their attention to restoring quality to the classroom. Improvement of education quality in Africa will yield higher economic returns than will expansion of enrollments at the current low levels of quality.

"Most African countries recognize the need for better quality and are desperately looking for ways to make improvements," says Bank primary education specialist Himelda Martinez.

Educators identify three crucial inputs into better-quality education: good textbooks and teaching materials, well-planned teacher training, and reliable testing.

In primary schools, high-quality books—at least one for every two students—that are part of a materials package have proved to be the best investment in developing countries. (See World Bank Education News, textbook issue, First Quarter 1987.)

"Teacher training can also improve quality, but it must be sequential," says Mrs. Nkwanga, "otherwise follow-up courses may repeat initial training—a needless waste of money. The 'center to periphery' approach—from the national to the regional to the district to the individual school—will train the most teachers at the least cost. If the administrators of a program do all the training, others miss out on the 'multiplier' effect."

Training is important for teachers or superintendents who went to a poor school and do not have a mental image of what a good school is like, believes Ms. Martinez. "They may never have experienced student participation or creative problem solving."

Testing how much students are learning is a way to measure the success of teacher training. "How do you judge whether a student is learning?" asks Aklilu Habte, Special Adviser in the Bank's Africa region. "And what is the general level of achievement at the end of primary or secondary school? We simply do not know. In Africa, as elsewhere, individual teachers give and grade examinations subjectively, so the results are not objective and comparable."

For this you need standardized tests and valid evaluations.

Some countries with a commitment to high academic standards are now developing these tests. In the Kenya school system, a team of evaluators—specialists in curriculum testing—

See **Africa** *p. 9.*

Unit Costs of Public Education as Percentage of Per Capita GNP

Region/Country Group	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Sub-Saharan Africa	15	62	800
Francophone	23	86	1,000
Anglophone	12	51	600
Asia			
South East Asia and Pacific	11	20	118
South Asia	8	18	119
Latin America	9	26	88
All developing countries	14	41	370
Advanced countries	22	24	49

Source: A. Mingat and G. Psacharopoulos, *Education Costs and Financing in Africa: Some Facts and Possible Lines of Action*, December 1985, EDT13.

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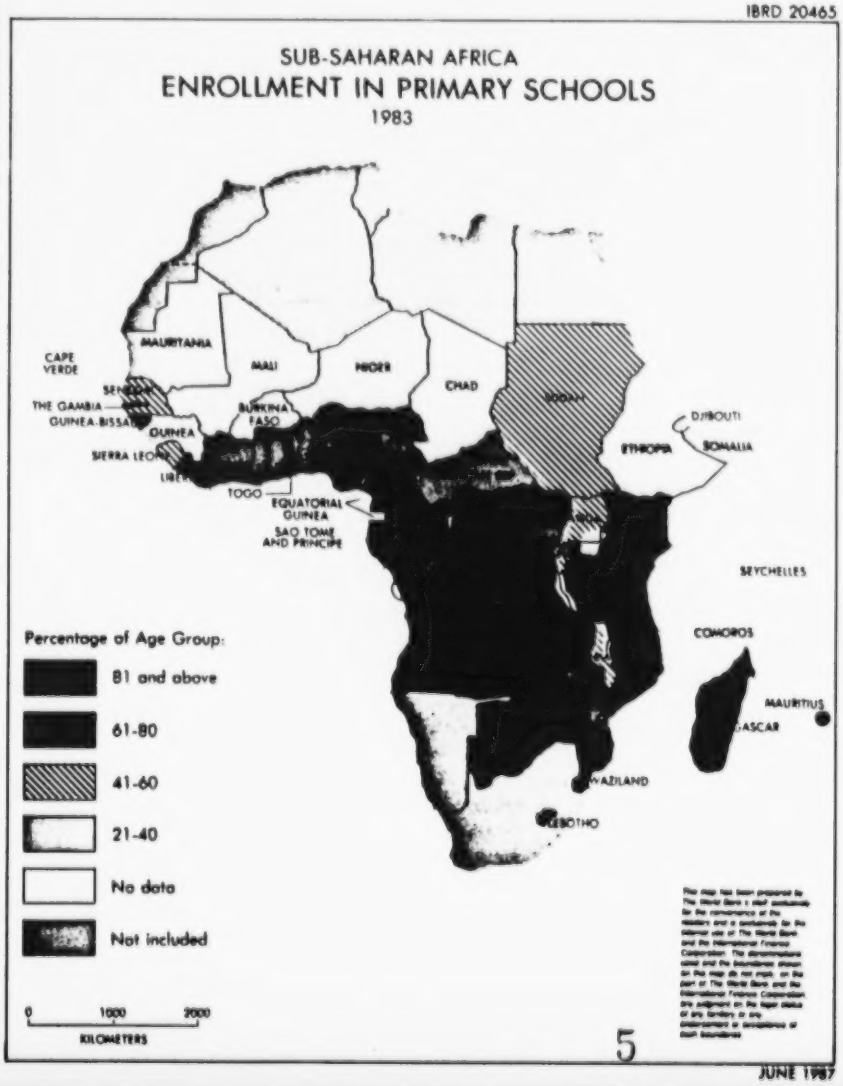

Dijon Papers

Twelve of the 30 papers presented at the June 1986 Dijon Conference on the Economics of Education were chosen for the *Economics of Education Review* (EER) vol. VI, no. 2. The meeting was partially supported by the World Bank.

The papers selected covered four categories of topics:

The Time Component in Educational Investments: M.J. Bowman: On the Importance of Examining Cohort Uniqueness in the Formulation of Human Investment Policies; A. Ziderman: Initial vs. Recurrent Training for the Skilled Trades in Israel; J.M. Ritzen: Human Capital and Economic Cycles.

Access to Education: E. King: Rising Educational Levels in the Philippines; E. Jimenez, J.P. Tan: Selecting the Brightest for Post-Secondary Education in Colombia.

Impact of Schooling on Incomes and Earnings: W. McMahon: The Relation of Education and R&D to Productivity Growth in the Developing Countries of Africa; J. Behrman: Schooling in Developing Countries: Which countries are the over- and underachievers and what is the schooling impact?; D. Jamison and J. Van der Gaag: Determinants and Economic Consequences of School Participation in China; L.Y. Soon: Self-employment vs. Wage-employment: Problems of estimation of Earnings Function in LDCs.

Organizing and Financing Optimal Education Services: E. Velez, G. Psacharopoulos: The External Efficiency of Diversified Secondary Schools in Colombia; D. Monk: Organizational Alternatives for Small Rural Schools; M. Woodhall: Financing Student Loans: The Effects of Recent Policy Trends.

The papers share a common theme, according to Benoit Millot, Bank economist who helped organize the meeting: the search for better information on which to base judgements for allocation of resources.

The collection represents "an impressive accumulation of knowledge," says Mr. Millot, "and shows that research in economics of education is a long way from the point of diminishing returns."

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Africa, *from p. 5.*

called on math and language specialists to prepare questions, give and correct tests, and analyze the results.

"If good students could answer the questions and poor students could not, the questions were judged valid. It's expensive," says Ms. Martinez, "but essential to know how much a student is learning at each level."

Selective Expansion

With adequate funding and acceptable quality, African nations can then emphasize expansion in priority areas. The Bank paper recommends striving for universal primary education with *selective* expansion at the secondary and university levels as the best means to achieve Africa's social and economic goals.

"If they wish to fulfill these goals," says Mr. Aklilu, "every single African government must strive to give a basic education to all of the people."

Zimbabwe has made dramatic progress. Following independence in 1980, reform proceeded at a rapid rate. By 1985 Zimbabwe had achieved universal primary education, and secondary enrollment burgeoned from below 10% of the age group to above 40% today.

"Educational investment is not an either/or solution," says Mr. Aklilu. "Even countries with little money can't afford to educate their citizens to the basic level and stop. More secondary schools are needed too."

Although investments in primary education have brought the highest returns so far, secondary schooling focused on general (language, mathematics and science), not vocational, skills brings returns almost as high according to recent EDT research. Through interactive radio, secondary education can contain unit costs on the secondary level and thereby educate a much greater proportion of young people.

"Governments also have to have high-quality tertiary institutions" says Mr. Aklilu, "to provide professional leadership: doctors, lawyers, managers and business people who can take advantage of advanced technology to improve the economy."

Rapid expansion in higher education during post-independence years, when enrollments grew from 21,000 in 1960 to more than 430,000 in 1983, created a surplus of graduates ill-prepared to help the economy.

Many of the graduates went to schools that were severely lacking in resources. On a visit to seven sub-Saharan universities, Janet de Merode, Deputy Chief of the West Africa Education Division, noticed a dearth of textbooks and scientific journals. "Some libraries had not procured a book or periodical in five years; others had only five books in a subject for a course."

"Because universities are expensive, investments must be cost-effective," adds Mr. Aklilu.

Alexander ter Weele, Chief of the Bank's West Africa Education Division, calls higher education "Africa's dilemma. Despite the financial crisis of the continent and the high cost of a university education, Africa has no choice but to educate tomorrow's leaders."

One solution is to create centers of excellence—university departments that could become reservoirs of expertise. Ms. de Merode compares this concept with the renowned center of Islamic studies at Timbuktu. "In West Africa, some departments already draw students from other African countries. For example, law in Ghana, medicine in Central African Republic, engineering in Mali."

Management institutes also play an essential role in the economy. The best educational strategy will not survive without efficient management, explains Alain Colliou, Chief of the Bank's Eastern and Southern Africa Education Division. "Good management—from the permanent secretary of the ministry to the director of planning to the headmaster of a school—is crucial. There are now at least 15 African training institutes worth strengthening," says Mr. Colliou.

"It's not only a question of educating students; it's a question of using them well," sums up Mr. Aklilu. "A college, technical program or university diploma is not the end. To get high returns, African governments still have to make good use of graduates, especially those in agriculture, engineering, education and the whole field of managment. That is what eventually will make the difference."■